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12th plenary meeting
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New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Somsavat Lengsavad, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Lengsavad (*spoke in Lao; English text provided by the delegation*): On behalf of the delegation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, I would like to thank Mr. Julian Hunte, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, for his dedication and hard work and to welcome Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and la Francophonie of the Republic of Gabon, as President of the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

On this occasion, I would also like to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his tireless efforts to make the United Nations more effective, and especially for taking the initiative to establish a High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change to address United Nations reform and to propose recommendations to the General Assembly. The member States all look forward to seeing and considering those eagerly awaited recommendations.

In 2000, the Millennium Declaration, a landmark document, manifested our strong will to face the most pressing challenges of our time. The Millennium Development Goals have become fundamental benchmarks in our efforts to achieve economic growth and sustainable development. Over the past four years, their implementation at the global and regional levels has proved to be successful in some countries, while many developing countries, especially the least developed, have had difficulties in attaining those goals due to unfavourable conditions. In that context, the Lao People's Democratic Republic views the high-level plenary meeting to review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, scheduled for next year, as a crucial opportunity for the international community to take stock of the progress made and to develop appropriate measures to secure the necessary financial resources for better achievements in the years ahead.

The international situation continues to be marked by rapid and complex evolution. In that context, peace and international security must be preserved at all costs. The Non-Aligned Movement, at its ministerial conference held in Durban, South Africa, from 17 to 19 August 2004, reiterated its commitment to multilateralism in the maintenance of international peace and security. The strengthening and promotion of the multilateral process would certainly contribute to the world's efforts effectively to address international challenges.

Today, weapons of mass destruction — be they chemical, biological or nuclear — all pose major threats to peace and security at the regional and global levels and are far from being totally eliminated.

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Therefore, we should all work collectively to ensure that those inhumane weapons disappear from the face of the Earth.

Terrorism continues to bring disaster to humanity and endangers national and international security. The international community is urged to further cooperate at the national, regional and international levels in the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. All acts of terrorism, wherever and by whomever committed, are criminal and unjustifiable. To that end, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reaffirms its position to continue to cooperate with the international community based on the principles of the United Nations Charter, international law and relevant international conventions.

The year 2005 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Asian-African Conference. The commemoration of this golden jubilee will be a crucial opportunity to solemnly reaffirm the validity of the core principles of the Bandung spirit, which are solidarity, friendship and cooperation, and which continue to serve as an effective foundation for resolving global problems and promoting good relations among the countries and the peoples of the world.

Recently, the increasingly deteriorating security situation in Iraq has been cause for concern. The Lao People's Democratic Republic expresses the hope that a peaceful solution can be found to achieve peace and stability and to ensure the well-being of the Iraqi people.

We commend the efforts being made to find a peaceful solution to the Korean Peninsular issue through the convening of three rounds of six-party talks. We hope that all parties concerned will pursue those talks in order to achieve permanent peace and security in the Korean Peninsula, thus creating favourable conditions for peaceful reunification.

Violence continues unabated in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem. Such violence will hurt the peace efforts in the Middle East and prolong the suffering of the peoples of the region. Thus, we urge the parties concerned to engage in serious dialogue, settle their conflict and realize the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Last month, at its Durban Ministerial Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement called once again upon the Government of the United States to put an end to the economic, financial and trade embargo against Cuba. That unilateral embargo, which has caused immense material losses and economic damage to the people of Cuba, runs counter to the United Nations Charter and international law. It is time that the embargo was lifted.

Capitalizing on the momentum achieved at the historic international ministerial conference at Almaty, Kazakhstan, to address the special needs of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), the Lao People's Democratic Republic, as Chairman of the Group of LLDCs, has spared no efforts to bring benefits to these vulnerable developing countries. We would like to convey our appreciation to eleventh session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which recognized LLDCs as small and vulnerable economies. We hope that such special recognition will be granted by other international forums and organizations, in particular the World Trade Organization, as gaining access to international markets for products of interest to our countries will significantly help to overcome our geographical handicap as landlocked States.

The global illicit drug problem and related crime remain an issue of concern to the world community. Owing to its cross-border and international nature, this problem can be dealt with effectively only through international cooperation. In an effort to contribute to the fight against this scourge, the Lao People's Democratic Republic continues to build and intensify cooperation at the national, regional and international levels. As a result, opium cultivation in our country declined significantly from 2003 to 2004, and we will strive to eliminate opium cultivation by 2005. I take this opportunity to appeal to the international community to continue to grant financial support to assist our country in addressing a number of challenges, namely the treatment of opium addicts, the creation of new and sustainable employment and the provision of necessary infrastructures to prevent former opium poppy growers from replanting.

Over the past year, the Lao people of all ethnic origins, all walks of life and all religions have been living in solidarity and harmony. Social and political stability across the country remained solid. The economy enjoyed a sustained growth rate of 6.5 per cent. The poverty of the people has been gradually

reduced, and external relations of cooperation have been broadened extensively. Later this year, the Lao People's Democratic Republic will be hosting the 10th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit and other related summits with ASEAN dialogue partners. On that occasion, a number of important documents will be adopted, aiming to accelerate regional integration and the establishment of the ASEAN community by 2020.

In its nearly 60 years of existence, the United Nations, has played its role in promoting international peace and security and socio-economic development. It has had much success. As we enter the twenty-first century, our world today is still confronted with numerous complex problems including wars, armed conflicts, terrorism, global crime, human trafficking, global warming, environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS and other diseases and the marginalization of developing countries, in particular the three most vulnerable groups among them: the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing States. The international community should cooperate and work collectively through the United Nations to address the global challenges of our time.

The United Nations needs to be reformed if the Organization is to be more effective and more democratic. The General Assembly should also have an important and more active role to play in the management of world affairs. With respect to the Security Council, we wish to reaffirm the position of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, first expressed many years ago, that there should be an increase in the number of permanent and non-permanent members from the developed and developing countries, in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution and taking into account the relative importance of the various countries. In the same context, the Lao People's Democratic Republic supports Japan, Germany and India as permanent members in a new, expanded Security Council.

All this would greatly contribute to achieving our ultimate goal of making the United Nations, our universal Organization, an organization that can gain the trust and the confidence of Member States.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hor Namhong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Hor (Cambodia): At the outset, I wish to join other Member States in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. Given your extensive experience and wisdom, I am confident that you will successfully steer the course of this session, which is important for the challenging world that we live in today.

I commend the efforts and the contribution to the United Nations of Mr. Julian Hunte as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, and I express my appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his commitment, dedication and leadership in working to further the realization of the objectives and the mission of the United Nations in our increasingly complex world.

Since 11 September 2001, the response to terrorism at the global, regional and national levels has been significant and massive. Nevertheless, despite the progress we have made in our efforts, countries throughout the world continue to suffer from terrorist attacks that continue to kill innocent people. Therefore, I believe that our response to this deadly threat to humanity must be more comprehensive. However, I also believe that, while we fight terrorism relentlessly, we should do our best to understand its true root causes. When we are able to do that, we can hope to eliminate terrorism.

When the Millennium Development Goals were launched in 2000, they held much hope for developing countries, but so far there have been no meaningful results. Poverty on many parts of the globe remains one of the greatest challenges in the world today, with more than 1.2 billion people surviving on less than $1 per day. Global poverty reduction is not the responsibility of developing countries alone; it is also the shared responsibility of the international community, particularly the developed countries. Perhaps it is time for more concrete actions rather than mere declarations.

With regard to the Middle East conflict, I believe that the international community should continue to support the inalienable and sacred right of the Palestinian people to an independent State. We should also urge all parties involved to put an end to the violence once and for all. All the parties must put aside

their hatred and their historical animosity. Both the Palestinians and the Israelis must realize that they have equal rights to coexist, living side by side in peace and harmony for the sake of their own peoples and peace in the region.

Concerning the situation in Iraq, I believe that the current, unending violence there has not created an environment conducive to national reconciliation and peace. It is my view that the United Nations and the international community must do everything possible to restore peace, security and political stability to Iraq so that the Iraqi people will have a chance to choose, in a sovereign manner, their own leaders and their own Government. I believe that democracy can never be exported or imported; it is a state of mind and must be learned.

With regard to the Taiwan issue, Cambodia is of the view that it is a vital issue not only for China, but also for the region as a whole. Cambodia, like other members of the community of nations, has been unequivocally supportive of a genuine "one-China" policy, since we recognize the fact that Taiwan is an integral part of China.

Every year in the General Assembly, most members of this global institution have called for reform of the United Nations, particularly of the Security Council. Indeed, Cambodia is of the view that reform of the Council is essential, not only for the credibility of the Council itself, but for that of the entire United Nations system as well. The reform of the Security Council will undoubtedly reflect the realities of the world today. In reforming the Council by enlarging its membership, we will make it more representative, more democratic and more efficient. In that regard, Cambodia supports the candidacies of Japan, Germany and India for permanent seats on the Council. The number of non-permanent members representing various parts of the world should also be increased.

Cambodia wishes to appeal to all Member States to support its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the period 2006-2007. Since we joined the United Nations in 1955, Cambodia has never held any position within it, although we have always cooperated closely with the Organization.

With the formation of our new Government in July this year, and with the adoption of our rectangular strategy and our political programme, the Royal Government of Cambodia has accorded top priority to building good governance in order to carry out key areas of reform and the four pillars of its rectangular strategy for socio-economic development.

In conclusion, I believe that we need to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are followed up and carried out in response to the hopes of the billions of poor people who live in developing countries. Moreover, I feel that poverty reduction should remain a top priority to be addressed collectively by the international community so that we can close the gap between the haves and the have-nots. In the light of the challenges that pose greater threats to our world today than ever before — terrorism, violence, conflict, poverty, epidemics of infectious diseases, environmental degradation and many others — I firmly believe that we need a stronger and more efficient United Nations to address those challenges in the most effective way possible. In that regard, the Organization must be truly representative, fully democratic and strongly committed to the cause of humanity.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rashid Meredov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

Mr. Meredov (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): I should like at the outset to express my sincere gratitude for the honour to speak from this rostrum and to convey, on behalf of the President of Turkmenistan, Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov, best wishes for peace and prosperity to the peoples of all nations. I should also like to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his election to that lofty and responsible post and to wish him every success in fruitfully guiding the work of the fifty-ninth session.

The events taking place in the world today, which are influencing the development of every region and every country, attest to the dramatic changes that have occurred in the meaning of the historical process under new conditions. Our ability to elaborate and implement qualitatively new approaches to interaction within the community of nations will largely determine the degree to which security and stability are maintained throughout the world. In that context, an immutable principle and basic direction for Turkmenistan's foreign policy remains the strengthening and development of close cooperation with the United

Nations. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his constant support for the peace-loving foreign policy of Turkmenistan.

We should note that among the priority areas of our country's cooperation with the United Nations are maintaining international peace and security and preventing or resolving conflicts through political means and processes. With regard to those issues, Turkmenistan has often become a centre where, under the aegis of the United Nations and with the participation of its Special Representatives, effective negotiations have been carried out to resolve complex situations that have taken place in the countries of our region.

During the present general debate, it has been noted several times that one of today's major threats to international security and stability is terrorism. Following the events of 11 September 2001, Turkmenistan was one of the first countries to support the United Nations initiative of establishing an international coalition to fight terrorism, in which we have taken an active part.

In that context, Turkmenistan not only firmly condemns any act of terrorism in any part of the world, but also is undertaking specific legislative and practical measures aimed at fighting that evil and preventing it from spreading. That is particularly relevant, given that the security conditions of the world community are determined by each country's actual contribution to the strengthening of its own internal stability, together with cooperation at the collective level. This is why we believe that there is a need today to draw up a qualitatively new dimension, both between individual States and within the framework of their joint activity in international organizations.

Despite the fact that terrorism is multifaceted, its nature is one and the same, and at its roots lie a doctrinaire egoism which has been raised by its followers to the highest level of evil, intolerance and cruelty. Terrorism recognizes no State and no nationality; it is not affiliated with any religion or culture. This is why the war on terrorism and terrorists must be conducted through joint efforts.

It is precisely through the close coordination of actions of members of the international community, on the basis of norms of international law, that the establishment of a situation in the world can be conducted in such a way that any manifestation of terrorism will be punished and, as a result, it will be possible to take effective measures to combat it. Here, Turkmenistan favours effective implementation of a broad-ranging system of measures to combat terrorism, including active cooperation in finding and bringing to justice the organizers and perpetrators of terrorist acts.

To counteract international terrorism, and to protect the rights and freedoms of our citizens, we must be able to forestall each of its manifestations and counter it, not only through universal unanimous condemnation, but also through a high degree of professionalism of law enforcement agencies, and also through the active use of the entire international legal array of instruments drawn up within the framework of the United Nations.

Further involvement of the role of the United Nations is becoming clearer against the backdrop of the present development of both global and regional processes that require the concentration of collective efforts and the adoption of decisions, taking into account a multitude of interests. Here, the fundamental principles of international cooperation enshrined in the Charter and the criteria tested by time concerning maintaining the balance of interests are a high priority for us. By following such a policy, Turkmenistan always attempts fully to utilize the potential of the community of nations and institutions in proposing and implementing foreign policy initiatives.

We see vast potential in the close partnership with the United Nations and its specialized structures in implementing joint programmes and projects. In this context, we would like to express our gratitude for cooperation extended to us by such United Nations specialized agencies as the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the United Nations Population Fund. Through interaction with these agencies, the Government of Turkmenistan is implementing a number of major projects that are yielding specific results in the social sphere, health care, education, the environment, combating illicit drug trafficking and a number of other areas. Turkmenistan will continue to maintain close ties with these United Nations agencies in the quest for and implementation of new possibilities for cooperation.

A clear example of the strategic partnership of Turkmenistan with the United Nations was the signing of our country's Government in February of 2004 of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework to promote development for 2005-2009. A significant feature of this document is the fact that it fully coincides with the national priorities and interests of Turkmenistan, as defined by the National Development Strategy of our country for the period until 2020. It aims at resolving global objectives within the framework of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

One of the important components of Turkmenistan's policy is the human dimension. Our country is conducting joint work with international organizations in this area. During the years of independence, we have worked to create genuine guarantees for the implementation of personal, political, economic, social and other rights of citizens. The personal rights of citizens have been specifically reflected in Turkmenistan's laws and law enforcement practice concerning such matters as the abolition of the death penalty, the banning of searches on citizens and the banning of the adoption of ad hoc decisions in pressing criminal charges. Through practical action, Turkmenistan reaffirms the implementation of these legal acts.

Every year in our country, by presidential decree, there is a widespread amnesty, the next to take place in just a month. As a result, more than 9,000 people will be amnestied.

Today in Turkmenistan there are no restrictions whatsoever on travel of its citizens abroad. There is guaranteed freedom of registration and activity of religious organizations and groups, in accordance with universally recognized international law, regardless of the number of adherents or of their faith. A number of very important legislative acts were adopted regarding these issues, in accordance with which, at the present time in Turkmenistan, there are various religious faiths registered and functioning.

As for the human dimension, Turkmenistan has intensified its work with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). On our invitation, in March 2004, Turkmenistan was visited by a group of experts from the OHCHR, who, together with the Turkmen side, drew up specific areas for cooperation and rendered assistance in work on the further development of this human dimension, among which was methodological and legal assistance in the preparation of national reports on United Nations conventions in the field of human rights. We intend to continue our efforts regarding these issues and are ready to cooperate with all of the United Nations agencies and other international organizations.

Against the backdrop of such effective interaction, we are concerned that in 2003 the General Assembly's Third Committee considered a draft resolution regarding human rights in Turkmenistan. The proposal was made by representatives of several countries without having visited Turkmenistan, without having studied the situation on the ground, without taking into account the significant initiatives of the Government of Turkmenistan in this sphere and without having first acquainted the Turkmen side with its contents. Such attempts at a one-sided consideration of serious questions is, in our view, unacceptable, and it is not in keeping with constructive cooperation in this sphere. The adoption of hasty decisions does not make a positive contribution to constructive dialogue. This is extremely important, particularly in the light of the principle of mutual respect for States, one of the dominating principles in the system of values professed by the United Nations.

At the crossroads of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, our region, Central Asia, has moved into the forefront of the international community's attention. How multilateral dialogue will take place on problems of this region to a great extent will determine the prospects for peace and security on a global scale.

Aware of its full responsibility to the international community, Turkmenistan attaches utmost importance to the role of the United Nations in stepping up regional and interregional dialogue in seeking solutions to potential problems. In this regard, I should like to draw the Assembly's attention to the initiative of the President of Turkmenistan regarding the creation of a Central Asian regional consultative council of heads of State.

The issue here is about the creation of an inter-State body at the highest level for holding regular consultations and working out joint decisions on relevant issues that directly affect the fate of the countries of the region and the real needs of the people that inhabit those regions. These are, first of all, issues

of cooperation in trade and the economy, energy supply, border trade, transportation and humanitarian issues. In our view, this mechanism for multilateral consultations at the head-of-State level would promote the development and implementation of agreed actions by parties on the basis of mutual interest and would allow for creation of the most effective system of rational interaction.

In October 2003, in Ashkhabad, the first round of a forum on conflict prevention and sustainable development for Central Asia took place under the aegis of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In the context of strengthening the effectiveness of instruments of preventive diplomacy, we believe it to be useful and advisable to create a United Nations centre on preventive diplomacy in the Central Asian region. Turkmenistan is ready to provide full assistance towards locating it in our nation's capital.

An important stage in intensifying regional cooperation was the preparation of the trans-Afghan — or Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan — gas pipeline project. Turkmenistan welcomes the interest of large companies and financial and industrial groups in that major project. Here, I would like to note that the United Nations, using its broad international authority, could have worked out a system of political and legal guarantees to ensure conditions favourable to the project.

It is important to recall that in the past Turkmenistan proposed, from this rostrum, an initiative to formulate and adopt under the aegis of the United Nations an international convention on a regime governing the functioning of inter-State pipelines, and associated guarantees. We believe that such a document would make it possible to create a dependable political and legal mechanism to ensure the transportation of raw materials to world markets.

On the question of implementing a secure development strategy and enhancing cooperation in the region, I would like to underscore issues of international cooperation regarding the Caspian Sea. These relate first and foremost to the exploration of the Caspian Sea's richest fields of hydrocarbon resources and are linked not only to the interests of the countries of the region but to those of many other States and transnational companies. Our policy is aimed at merging those interests.

It is a well-known fact that the oil and natural gas reserves of the Caspian Sea are the planet's most important energy resources for the twenty-first century. Their reasonable and effective exploration and the construction of pipeline infrastructure to transport them to world markets would ensure significant economic growth in many States and the well-being of their peoples.

Effective economic activity on the Caspian Sea is closely linked to ensuring stability in the Caspian region. Turkmenistan favours making the Caspian Sea a zone of peace, stability and sustainable international cooperation.

We share the view that, in the twenty-first century, the United Nations system needs rational reform. We favour such United Nations reform, but only in terms of strengthening and broadening the Organization's role in the world. In this context, an important issue is ensuring maximum representation of States in the United Nations, in the broader community of nations, in the specialized agencies and in the United Nations system in general. In addition, the United Nations should make full use of the potential and advantages of Member States. For example, Turkmenistan is ready to provide United Nations agencies with resources to expand their presence in the region by opening headquarters and other major offices of United Nations agencies in our capital.

The diversity and complexity of the tasks facing the States Members of the United Nations is self-evident. Carrying them out requires not only collective efforts but also unambiguous awareness of the individual role and responsibility of each country of the international community. Turkmenistan adheres to that logic of political behaviour, with the objective of strengthening peace and promoting economic, social and cultural development.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to Her Excellency The Honourable Billie Miller, Senior Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Barbados.

Dame Billie Miller (Barbados): Mr. President, it is my pleasure to join with preceding speakers in congratulating you on your election to preside over the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. Barbados pledges its fullest cooperation in the year ahead.

I wish to thank and congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte, for his effective leadership of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Barbados was particularly pleased at the election of a representative of a small island Caribbean State to that high office in the United Nations, and President Hunte's outstanding performance was testimony to the critical and effective role that small islands can play in the multilateral process. His guidance of the work to revitalize the Assembly was particularly noteworthy.

This Organization has been accused of being out of touch or, worse, irrelevant to the changing world in which we live, despite its valiant efforts in recent years to promote development, restore peace and maintain security in many parts of the world. In these circumstances, it is incumbent upon all Member States to reaffirm their commitment to and support for the multilateral process, using the United Nations as its primary vehicle. At the same time, there must be a constant process of review, reform and renewal of the Organization so that it can remain relevant in the continuously changing international climate.

Furthermore, it is essential that political will be brought to bear on the seemingly intractable issue of reform of the Security Council. Barbados continues to be of the view that the Council must be made more representative of today's membership of the United Nations, as well as more transparent in its working methods and more democratic in its decision-making. The Security Council must earn the support and confidence of all Members of the United Nations if it is to fulfil its important mandate in an increasingly volatile and insecure international environment.

We must also recognize that reform cannot be kept merely within the confines of the United Nations. It must be accompanied by renewal of the wider international governance architecture. It strikes developing nations as deeply unjust and hypocritical that calls for democratization and good governance in the developing world are not accompanied by calls for those values to be reflected in the multilateral organizations by which so many are governed and upon which so many depend.

Enhancing the voice and participation of developing countries in international dialogue and decision-making is a fundamental prerequisite for improving global economic governance. Debate on reform of the international financial architecture should not continue to be restricted to the hallowed halls and boardrooms of the Bretton Woods institutions, but should also find a prominent place on the United Nations agenda. We all have a stake in the global economic system and its management. This highly complex and increasingly globalized and interconnected world demands a radically reformed system of global economic and financial governance that promotes equitable development.

A majority of States Members of this Organization, both developing and developed, have expressed the urgent need for a transparent, open, democratic and inclusive dialogue between sovereign States on international cooperation in tax matters, within the universal ambit of the United Nations. The persistence of exclusive and restricted membership organizations, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), that dictate norms and standards in international tax cooperation in lieu of an inclusive intergovernmental forum, is untenable.

While we are encouraged by the progress in the debate within the Economic and Social Council to convert the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters into a committee of that body, with a new and expanded mandate, we still await a final positive decision on the matter. We consider such a decision to be an important first step towards the creation of an international forum to promote and strengthen cooperation in tax matters.

Barbados recognizes the critical need for the Doha round of development negotiations to be revived with a developmental focus, and welcomes the decision on the Doha work programme reached by the World Trade Organization on 1 August. The concessions to the least developed countries evident in that framework agreement are laudable. But while it would appear that developed-country benefits remain substantially secure, the framework severely limits the ability of small middle-income developing countries to realize the reasonable benefits expected and necessary to advance their development interests.

Trade is a significant factor in the challenge of sustainable development, and trade rules need to take into account the vulnerabilities and the development needs of small States. It is true that developed and advanced developing country partners may experience

some developmental challenges similar to those of small States. But it is the inability of the small economies to respond satisfactorily to externally imposed shocks which makes them particularly vulnerable.

Barbados appeals to all World Trade Organization members to support the mandate given at Doha to examine issues related to trade in small economies and to frame action-oriented responses to those issues, in order to facilitate the fuller integration of small, vulnerable economies into the multilateral trading system.

With respect to small island economies, some of the greatest development threats are those from natural disasters of every kind, including floods, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and, especially, hurricanes. Indeed, in the course of a few hours, Hurricane Ivan devastated the island of Grenada. An economy has disappeared. For many Caribbean countries, this cycle of destruction is repeated year after year — on occasion, several times in the same year. Some of us are constantly repairing and replacing infrastructure, replanting crops and rebuilding our very lives.

When a hurricane hurts one or more big cities or states in the United States of America, resources are immediately redirected to help those affected. An entire state or city has never been eradicated. But that is precisely what Grenada experienced just three weeks ago. Can members begin to imagine the implications of a small State being reduced to rubble in less than a day? Terrorists could hardly do a more effective job. Yet such factors are never taken into account when gross domestic product is computed.

In response to this devastation, the heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) met in emergency session and developed a priority programme for the rehabilitation of Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique. For its part, Barbados has already contributed substantially to the relief effort. But the reality is that CARICOM by itself does not have the financial resources to cope. We call for an international donor conference to help Grenada.

In highlighting Grenada, however, we should not overlook the damage done by Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne to the Bahamas, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Tobago, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Cuba, Barbados and the United States, all in the course of the past few weeks.

Such catastrophic events directly affect the ability of many small vulnerable developing countries to fully implement the Millennium Development Goals and should be taken into account by the Assembly as it lays the groundwork for the 2005 review. Attaining those goals remains paramount. Barbados reaffirms its commitment to their achievement and urges all States to honour the spirit and intent of the Millennium Declaration.

The dominant view in some parts of the world is that the most serious threats to international peace and security are the recent virulent forms of terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and non-conventional weapons, and the spread of transnational criminal networks. But for many others around the globe, particularly those in the developing world, poverty, the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases, natural disasters, civil strife and other social, economic and environmental concerns remain the highest priority.

It is of the utmost importance that the international community strive to achieve unity of purpose in confronting these diverse security threats and challenges, based on a common multidimensional security agenda. The Secretary-General recently stated that the global security agenda should reflect a global consensus on the major threats to peace and security, be they old or new, hard or soft, and on our common response.

In that connection, we eagerly await his report on the work of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Member States must stand ready to make the necessary bold and drastic reforms of the current multilateral rules and institutions that govern international peace and security.

For small island developing States like Barbados, this wider multidimensional nature of threats to international peace and security is particularly important. In addition to the impact of natural disasters to which I have already referred, the trans-shipment of nuclear waste through the Caribbean Sea, global warming and water pollution all threaten our very existence as a nation. For us, challenges to our sustainable development represent some of the more serious threats to our security.

In this regard, we place great emphasis on the 10-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action, scheduled to take place in Mauritius next year, since it will present the international community with an opportunity to examine past successes and consider the future challenges that face small island developing States.

It is significant that small island developing States themselves have already implemented close to 70 per cent of the Barbados Programme of Action. We trust that the Mauritius meeting will provide our developed country partners with the opportunity to deliver on their past, present and future commitments.

Implicit in the proposal first submitted to the General Assembly in 1999 to designate the Caribbean Sea as a special area within the context of sustainable development is the recognition of the marine environment as our most precious natural resource and one of central social, economic and political significance to the Caribbean. Its protection and preservation remain a major priority of the region.

This year, the General Assembly will return to that issue. It remains the ultimate goal of the region to have the Caribbean Sea recognized as a special area within the context of sustainable development, and we look forward to continued assistance from the international community in helping us to achieve that objective.

Let me now turn to issues of particular relevance to Barbados and the Caribbean. Barbados considers it an irony of tragic proportions that, in the bicentennial year of Haiti's liberation from colonial control, that pioneer of independence has been plunged once again into crisis. While the events surrounding the abrupt departure of President Aristide remain a matter of deep concern — particularly as they pertain to the constitutionality of the removal of democratically elected leaders — Barbados is committed to assisting the people of Haiti in the process of normalization, the search for a peaceful solution to the political crisis, the strengthening of democratic governance in the country and the provision of humanitarian assistance.

Barbados is convinced that full engagement with the interim Government of Haiti best serves the interests of the Haitian people and reflects our stated desire to accompany them at this very difficult time in their history. This is a task which we must not shirk. Let there be no doubt: we expect the interim administration to uphold the highest standards set by the Charter of Civil Society for the Caribbean Community and to fulfil its commitment as regards the rule of law, equal justice for all, democracy and good governance. We look forward to the full implementation of resolution 2058 (XXXIV-0/04) of the Organization of American States on the strengthening of democracy in Haiti, as well as to the holding of municipal, national and presidential elections in 2005, as promised. In this regard, Barbados intends to play its part in international efforts to assist Haiti to put the electoral process in place.

Barbados is hopeful that CARICOM will be able to play a key role in assisting Haiti through the Security Council-mandated United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). In this regard, the CARICOM Special Envoy, supported by a task force, has begun work to coordinate assistance to Haiti in areas where the countries of the region have recognized capacity.

Over the past week, we have all been made aware of the perilous situation confronting our brothers and sisters in Haiti as a result of the devastation caused by Tropical Storm Jeanne. Haiti is part of our CARICOM family. It is our duty to galvanize all our energies to assist in mitigating the plight of the Haitian people.

Two days ago, the Prime Minister of Barbados, the Honourable Owen Arthur, announced that the Government will provide technical assistance, as well as an initial contribution of 1 million Barbados dollars, to the interim Administration for the purpose of providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Haiti in the wake of Hurricane Jeanne.

The issue of Cuba's isolation within the hemisphere is also of concern to Barbados. We embrace Cuba as a bona fide sister State in the Caribbean region and are committed to a policy of constructive engagement with its Government and people. We do not believe that efforts to isolate Cuba, through exclusion from participation in hemispheric bodies such as the Organization of American States and the emerging free trade area of the Americas and measures that create greater hardship for the Cuban people such as the 50-year-long economic embargo will foster change in Cuba.

Like the entire Caribbean Community, Barbados, in its engagement with Cuba, has held close to the principles enshrined in the CARICOM Charter of Civil

Society. We cannot accept that a regime change exogenously imposed upon the people of Cuba could in any way be a viable option.

The Government of Barbados has long enjoyed a warm relationship with its Caribbean neighbour Venezuela and has been deeply concerned by the political crisis in that country. We are satisfied that the recent referendum has been safely and successfully completed. We now look forward to a period of calm in which the process of healing and dialogue — necessary for better understanding between competing groups — can occur. Venezuela needs all of its people working together if it is to move forward and continue to be a leading engine of development in the hemisphere and the beacon of democracy which its founding father intended. It behoves all who cherish democracy to do what we can to give Venezuelans that opportunity.

This year, the world commemorates the struggle against slavery and its abolition, with the goal of deepening knowledge of slavery and the slave trade and highlighting its philosophical, political and legal legacy. As the first landfall upon crossing the Atlantic Ocean, Barbados was the recipient of a large number of African slaves, leading to a major imprint of African cultures on the formation of the Barbadian society. That coincidence of history not only created the unique fraternal bond that characterizes the relationship between the Caribbean and Africa but also serves to make us uniquely aware of the interactions that the slave trade generated throughout the world among the different peoples involved.

Barbados supports the call of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for all peoples to eradicate through their actions the vestiges of slavery and to combat all new forms of servitude that represent intolerable violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Indeed, Barbados asserts that international peace and security can best be achieved through the building of tolerance based on recognition of cultural, racial and religious diversity.

The fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly has before it a number of issues that have the potential to shape the nature and direction of international relations for many years to come. Barbados intends to play an active role in its deliberations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Marwan Muasher, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Mr. Muasher (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, I wish to warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

The most recent Arab Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme identified the pressing challenges facing the Arab world both now and in the future. Thus, it contributed to triggering a broad debate on the future of reform in the Middle East.

Partly in response, the Tunis Arab Summit adopted in May 2004 a document on the process of development, modernization and reform in the Arab world with a view to improving joint Arab action. That platform paper highlighted the need to consolidate democratic principles and to broaden the base of political participation. It also called for intensifying efforts to improve performance in the political, economic, social and educational areas by: giving more attention to youth issues, the advancement of women and the modernization of social institutions throughout the Arab world; improving education; completing the Arab common market plan; and laying out a pan-Arab economic development strategy. Jordan, for its part, supports this vision, which is in line with the plans we have already been pursuing within our national reform agenda.

Jordan believes that for reform to be truly meaningful it has to emanate first and foremost from within society and be sensitive to the particular characteristics and needs of each country. Accordingly, we in Jordan sought to develop an integrated agenda that addresses the primary issues of concern to our citizens throughout the country. Those include broader political development and personal freedoms, greater roles for women and youth, a more efficient judiciary system, educational reform and the achievement of steady economic growth with a view to improving the living conditions of all individuals, leading to a more progressive, open and tolerant society.

Within the same framework, the Government of Jordan sought to strengthen the partnership between the public and private sectors, both inside Jordan and at the larger, Arab regional level. The most recent inter-Arab initiative was launched by Arab private sector

and grass-roots civil organizations, with active Jordanian participation, in Amman on the margin of the World Economic Forum, which was convened at the Dead Sea last May. That initiative laid the foundation for the delineation of a vision for the Middle East for the year 2010. A well-developed plan of action will be laid out at the Davos World Economic Forum in 2005. The plan will provide a framework for pooling and analysing constructive inputs and proposing answers for the challenges facing Jordan and the region in general.

However, the series of reform measures currently under way in Jordan will be inadequate without the support of the international community. The help we need involves support for our development projects, direct assistance to the Jordanian economy and foreign debt relief. Of special significance in this regard is the aid needed and expected from the Group of Eight industrial Powers to Jordan's plans and initiatives, which have been based on positive, realistic and sustainable goals.

The long-standing status quo in our region has made virtually impossible all serious efforts to forge ahead with the overall Middle East reform exercise. The creation of a favourable climate that helps accelerate regional development and progress depends on the termination of the Israeli occupation of Arab land on the basis of international legality with a view to ensuring security and stability in the region.

The time has indeed come to focus on starting the peace process on the basis of the road map and the terms of reference it contains, including the Arab peace initiative and implementation by both the Israeli and Palestinian sides of their respective obligations under the road map. In fact, the road map provides a well-defined vision of the ultimate solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, namely the vision put forward by President George Bush of the United States of two States living side by side in peace. President Bush reaffirmed that position in a letter he sent last May to His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Al Hussein. The letter also elaborated the firm position of the United States, which rejects any measures that would prejudice the outcome of final status negotiations on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The launching of any serious political process requires immediate action on the part of all parties to put an end to violence and to all forms of killing of civilians. Let me recall here that, according to the road map, the obligations of both sides must be carried out in concert. For its part, Israel should fulfil its commitments, beginning with the cessation of all settlement building and all extrajudicial killings. At the same time, the Palestinian side should complete the reforms required to control the security situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and bring violence to an end. In that regard, we welcome the decision to consolidate the Palestinian security apparatus. Israel's announcement of its unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, however, must be effected as an integral part of the road map and within its terms of reference. The withdrawal must be coordinated with all parties concerned, especially the Palestinian side, in order to ensure a smooth transfer of power.

It has become abundantly clear, now perhaps more than ever before, that there is a real need to develop an effective monitoring mechanism, operated by the Quartet, to ascertain whether all parties meet their mutual obligations and to ensure the scrupulous implementation of the road map by the two sides in their progress towards a successful conclusion. Here, I wish to pay tribute to the Quartet for its persistent efforts to maintain the momentum of the peace process.

Once again, I wish to reaffirm Jordan's commitment, along with that of all other Arab States, to the Arab peace initiative which the Arab Summit adopted in Beirut in 2002 with a view to putting an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict through the conclusion of a collective peace agreement providing for the security of all countries in the region and laying the foundation for the establishment of relations with Israel. The agreement would also create a framework for a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III), a full Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied in 1967 and the establishment of an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian State.

Jordan stresses the need to respect and implement the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the separation wall being built by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories. The pronouncement of the International Court of Justice is the law, and no peaceful settlement of the Palestinian question can be realized unless it is based on observance of the rules of international law and the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian

people, including the right to self-determination. In that regard, the Court's opinion was both clear and specific on the following points.

First, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is an occupied territory and, under international law, Israel is an occupying Power. Accordingly, the claim that the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is a "disputed territory" has been dismissed once and for all.

Second, the relevant rules of international humanitarian law are applicable to the occupied Palestinian territories, including The Hague Regulations of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which, according to the International Court of Justice, are legally applicable to that territory.

Third, the Palestinian people have the right to self-determination and Israel is violating that right in contravention of the binding norms of international law.

Fourth, the Israeli settlements built in the territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, are in breach of the rules of international humanitarian law.

Fifth, the construction by Israel of the wall in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, is illegal. Furthermore, Israel must cease its violations relating to the construction of the wall by, inter alia, dismantling those portions of it erected in the occupied Palestinian territories, reinstating the rights of the owners whose lands were lost and compensating those who incurred losses as a result of Israel's illegal actions.

Sixth, the construction of the wall and its route create a fait accompli on the ground which could become permanent and which, in that case, would be tantamount to the actual annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories.

Seventh, the international community is under a legal obligation to refrain from abetting Israel in its illegal activities and is prohibited from recognizing the illegal situation effected by the construction of the separation wall.

Accordingly, Jordan welcomes General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 and considers it an important step, reflecting the international community's recognition of the legal conclusions of the International Court of Justice and its desire to take practical steps to enforce it.

The separation wall threatens the national security of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. The wall is not only a barrier to the establishment of a viable independent Palestinian State, but it also partitions the West Bank into three distinct, isolated sections. Moreover, and in view of the arbitrary Israeli closures and restrictions on movement, the occupied Palestinian territories are witnessing an unprecedented level of deterioration in every aspect of their political, social, economic, security and humanitarian situation. This is bound to have a spill-over effect on neighbouring countries, especially Jordan.

That is the backdrop against which Jordan supported the efforts leading to the adoption of the International Court of Justice advisory opinion and Assembly resolution ES-10/15. Jordan will continue to support the Palestinian people in its efforts to establish an independent State on its national territory, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), the principle of land for peace, the road map and the Arab peace initiative. We also stand ready to provide any assistance that the Palestinian side might seek to help it to reform its administrative and security structures with a view to fulfilling its obligations under the road map.

Jordan welcomes the formation of the interim Iraqi Government and the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty at the end of last June. In that regard, we wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and his Special Adviser, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, for their unrelenting efforts, which culminated in the formation of the interim Government despite the enormous odds they encountered at every stage of the process.

Jordan underscores its support for the Government of Iraq and stands ready to lend all possible assistance to Iraq, its people and Government in the forthcoming phase in order to enable the country to rebuild its institutions, manage its own affairs and recover its regional and international status. The ongoing transition in Iraq and the need for it to develop its political and economic processes require the cooperation of all parties. With support, the Iraqi people will be able to determine their political future without external intervention, gain control of their

natural resources and preserve Iraq's territorial integrity.

Despite overwhelming odds and the current instability, it is our hope that elections for the transitional national assembly and the formation of a transitional Government will be completed by the end of January 2005. Jordan calls upon all States to provide every possible assistance towards the achievement of those goals. The United Nations obviously has a pivotal role to play in ensuring a successful outcome. In that regard, we welcome the appointment by the Secretary-General of his Special Representative for Iraq, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, and express our willingness to fully cooperate with him in order to ensure the complete and smooth fulfilment of the United Nations mandate in Iraq as set forth in Security Council resolution 1546 (2004).

In the meantime, Jordan strongly condemns violence, the killing of civilians and beheadings in Iraq. We remain committed to helping our Iraqi brothers in the training of Iraqi police and army units in order to enable them to improve their capacity to restore control over the security situation, as well as through the provision of necessary humanitarian assistance. It is indeed regrettable that there is still a tiny minority representing extremist movements and organizations that seek political power by means of intimidation and violence under the false pretext of Islamic action. Such groups exploit Islam as a means of achieving political or even personal gain by resorting to violence and terrorism and thus, unfortunately, tarnishing the image of Islam, a faith of moderation and tolerance.

We also condemn all acts of terror, including those gruesome and blind acts perpetrated in Madrid and Beslan, which require our firm collective stand in combating them.

The events of 11 September 2001 marked a new era of immense challenge to the international community in terms of dealing with the repercussions and implications of such events. Fighting international terrorism entails taking measures that affect international relations and the principles that have guided States since the creation of the United Nations and the adoption of its Charter.

In our view, a meaningful and effective global campaign against terrorism requires consensus on the following principles: Respect for the provisions of the Charter and the rules of international law, and non-transgression against the sovereignty of States; striking a balance between the counter-terrorism measures taken by States and the principles of human rights, public freedoms and non-abuse of the state of emergency to justify counter-terrorism measures; providing a clear and specific legal definition of "terrorism" as well as of the concept of "terrorist groups" that would not allow any legal justification for the commission of terrorist acts. By the same token, such definitions should not compromise the rights envisioned in the Charter and in the provisions of international humanitarian law, such as the right to self-determination.

In the same vein, combating global terrorism ought not be a tool for discrimination against the followers of any creed or a cover for assault against their religious beliefs. Finally, the "no justification for terror" policy should not lead to disregard for its underlying causes. Rather, an effective battle against terrorism would require global cooperation in addressing its root causes and the genesis of the phenomenon.

I am pleased to announce that the Government of Jordan has welcomed the formation of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change to examine the modalities for improving the performance of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security and its reform in general. We support the exercise undertaken by the Panel and look forward to receiving its recommendations at the end of the year.

We share the vision, laid out by the Secretary-General in his reports to the General Assembly, that reform is a continuous, comprehensive and dynamic process that must include all political, economic, administrative and financial activities of the United Nations. We also believe that, if reform is to succeed, genuine partnership between Member States represented by the regional groups and the Secretariat of the United Nations is required. In this regard, we believe that the thrust of reform should be an upgrading of efficiency and not a reduction in the expenditures or in the budget of the Organization. Therefore, a set of benchmarks must be developed to assess performance. In the meantime, there should be no room for the random setting of agenda priorities or for selectivity in implementing reform.

Regarding reform of the Security Council, I would be remiss if I failed to commend the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council. Jordan supports the principle of increasing membership in both permanent and rotating seats in order to make the Council more representative of the United Nations membership.

In this regard, Jordan is of the view that the responsibilities of Council members should be reconsidered in order to ensure that all members have the capacity and political will to contribute effectively to peacekeeping operations by way of meeting their obligations under the Charter. The contribution by Security Council members of human resources to peacekeeping field operations, not just of financial and equipment inputs, is an essential requirement for the success of those operations. This is indeed a primary responsibility that must be met by members of the Security Council, especially the permanent ones. In addition, we think that effective operations require the development of a flexible mechanism that allows the adoption of clear resolutions by the Council, in close coordination with troop-contributing countries that are not members of the Council, as well as functioning in a transparent framework.

In closing, let me once again thank you, Sir. I would also like to wish this session of the General Assembly every success as I pray to almighty God to guide us to better serve our people and to live up to the responsibilities entrusted to us.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Mr. Sathirathai (Thailand): At the outset, allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

The United Nations has long stood for the loftiest aspirations and the noblest causes of mankind. In times of strife, it is the United Nations that holds out the hope of harmony. In times of deprivation and suffering, it is the United Nations that holds out the hope of healing.

After almost 60 years, however, this Organization, on which we pin so much hope, finds itself in the midst of an existential crisis. In a world ever more complex and less predictable, the United Nations has been struggling to redefine its meaning, identity and relevance for the era of globalization. To confront those new realities and more, no challenge will be greater than making the United Nations a more effective Organization for the times. No challenge will be greater than living up to the highest ideals of the United Nations with more action and fewer words.

Our United Nations locomotive is powered by the commitment and good will of its Members. It can take us as far as we want to go, but only if we all pull together. It can take us at any speed, but only if the power of commitment and good will is fully energized. For whatever it is and for whatever it will be, the United Nations is the creation of its Members. So, in demanding more of the United Nations, we must also demand more of ourselves. And in asking the United Nations to do more, we must also be ready to be committed more.

The task ahead of us all is to make sure that all concerted efforts are made nationally, regionally and globally to advance the causes the United Nations stands for and to restore total confidence in the working of multilateralism. Multilateralism cannot thrive or sustain without foundation. The foundation of the United Nations and its multilateralism may be its 191 Member States, but what bond binds the 191 Member States to the United Nations multilateral system?

The world's strategic, political and economic landscape of the twenty-first century is certainly far different, more complex and more intertwined than that of 1945. The layers of interwoven fibre that support such a multilateral institution as the United Nations must be modified and strengthened. It is Thailand's belief that, given today's international landscape, there is a greater need than ever to create new layers of regional and subregional building blocks to strengthen the United Nations multilateral foundation. Those building blocks are the bond that binds nations to the multilateral system.

In so doing, those regional and subregional building blocks must bear the responsibility of supporting and advancing the United Nations goals on security and development: reducing poverty, combating international terrorism, fighting transnational crime,

promoting human dignity and human rights, and upholding the human race as a whole.

In South-East Asia, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is to create its three-pillared community — the ASEAN Economic Community, the ASEAN Security Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community — by the year 2020. The realization of ASEAN communities, as in other regional or subregional communities, requires bridging the development gap.

It was Thailand's initiative to take on the role of building that bridge by introducing the Economic Cooperation Strategy — known as ACMECS — and thereby laying a faster track towards sustainable development for its neighbours: Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. Through the creation of more jobs and the narrowing of the income gap, that strategy will serve as a building block for ASEAN's three-pillared community.

Further to the east, the ASEAN 10 are working with its East Asian friends to create the East Asian Community, comprising the ASEAN 10, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. To the west, Thailand sees the need to connect south-east Asia's development with its friends in South Asia. The first summit of the Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) — seven countries in South-East and South Asia around the Bay of Bengal — took place in Thailand in July, agreeing on a free trade area within the group which forms an economic and development bridge between the two subregions.

These building blocks and that partnership are part and parcel of the firm foundation for the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD), the first pan-Asian development forum. The ACD was initiated on the basis of Thailand's conviction as to the virtue of partnership in drawing strength from diversity and in transforming diversity from a phenomenon that tears us apart to a force that unites us.

With 25 member countries — countries from every part of Asia — and still growing, the two-and-a-half-year-old ACD will become an important building block for multilateral cooperation and the United Nations multilateral system. Through such building blocks, we can learn to live with one another's differences and to cultivate a culture of peace and tolerance in order to counteract the violence and terror in today's world.

We cherish multilateralism as the best means to secure peace around the world. We cherish multilateralism as the best means to develop prosperity around the world. But above all, we cherish multilateralism as the best means to achieve both security and development worldwide. By the same token, State security and human security, which foster development, must always be two sides of the same coin.

From Iraq to Saudi Arabia, from Indonesia to Russia, shocking acts of terror have been perpetrated, seemingly calculated to shake confidence and undermine hope. As civilized societies, we must come together to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, wherever it may occur. Terrorism is a direct threat to State security, but it also undermines human security.

That is why the development of human security and State security must proceed on parallel tracks. The world cannot be a secure place if its population is still suffering from poverty and deprivation. The world cannot really be peaceful if we cannot be successful in our efforts to make progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

That is why Thailand believes in the enhancement of human security as a means of making the nation secure. Domestically, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security is in charge of our policy and implementation. Internationally, we are active in the Human Security Network and in other international arenas in which human security issues are paramount.

Thailand has long advocated balanced development, with freedom from fear and freedom from want as the two inseparable prongs of human security. We intend to continue to do so even more intensively as Thailand prepares to assume the chairmanship of the Human Security Network in 2005-2006. We intend to further advocate such balanced development by embracing partnership between the Government and civil society.

The Human Security Network statement issued in Thailand on the eve of the 15th International AIDS Conference in Bangkok last July — which was attended by more than 25,000 people and recognized

HIV/AIDS as an issue of both development and human security — clearly reflects development and security as interconnected.

We view the issue of landmines in the same light. They are as much a humanitarian issue as a development one. As President of the Fifth Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine-Ban Convention, I have been working with the World Bank to reflect that approach in carrying out mine action. I am grateful for the Bank's cooperation in realizing the development dimension of the landmine issue. I also appreciate the Bank's readiness to mobilize resources for the training of deminers and capacity-building for survivors so that they may function as productive members of society. We are confident that the World Bank partnership will provide States parties to the Convention with greater resources that will help to achieve the Convention's goal.

As we try to secure peace for the world; as attempts are made to shatter our world's peace and security with terror, fear, hatred and violence; as many struggle against poverty; and as we pledge our commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, the multilateral system that we need to rely upon is facing challenges and threats to its effectiveness of unprecedented a magnitude and proportion.

However, amid those challenges, we are fortunate to see today nations building partnership with nations; nations learning to live with differences, and even turning differences and diversity into a common strength; and nations learning to achieve a higher level of tolerance, working at the economical, cultural and political levels to nurture a culture of peace and a culture of tolerance.

Through building blocks like the ones Thailand has been initiating in Asia, throughout Africa, Latin America, Europe and elsewhere, and through South-South cooperation, a number of responsible nations are ready to make contributions, in their own way, to turn differences into cooperation and partnerships. Those partnerships and building blocks deal with security and development, the two defining principles of the United Nations.

Those partnerships and building blocks can lay the foundation for a more effective functioning of the United Nations multilateral system — a system that needs redefining and redesigning to respond effectively to the new geosocial and political landscape of the world.

Present-day realities — the emergence of building blocks, the inextricable linkage between development and security, and the need to develop human and State security on parallel tracks — clearly reflect how much the world has changed since 1945.

That is why United Nations reform is not a question only of the effectiveness of any particular organ of the Organization. Nor is it merely a question of numbers or composition. It is fundamental, therefore, to ask some pertinent questions.

How can the United Nations be made more responsive to current needs and realities, so that it devotes equal attention to the issues of security and development? What would be the best mechanism to deal adequately with issues of development and long-term global economic issues? What would be the best mechanism to deal adequately with post-conflict nation-building and reconstruction? What would be the best mechanism to ensure a greater participation of civil society, recognizing it as an important constituency for development and conflict resolution? How to ensure cooperation among the multilateral United Nations system and regional, subregional and interregional organizations, recognizing them as important building blocks for a more effective multilateralism?

Security Council reform is needed. That much is not in doubt. But if expansion is needed, what realistic criteria are necessary for the expansion to reach greater effectiveness? Does it need to be more transparent? What are the roles and relationship among its members?

Concerning the General Assembly, a body represented now by almost 200 Member States, more than three times larger than at the time of the founding of the United Nations, is it too cumbersome and do we remain content with its work process? How can the Assembly be streamlined, energized, and become more focused?

Those are not all the questions asked, and Thailand is not the only one asking. But all of us will have to find the answers. While we are all entitled to different views, opinions, and analyses, ultimately the decision must be made by us, the Member States of the United Nations.

Reform of such a venerable institution is never easy. We have to be realistic about that. But we have faith in the far-sightedness and wisdom of United Nations Members to take a holistic view and choose the right path, even if it is the path less travelled. Thailand pledges to apply all our experiences in forging partnerships in order to play a responsible and constructive role in contributing to the United Nations reform process. We have supported the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and will look forward to its report in December, as well as to the fruitful and constructive debate by all of us thereafter.

Whether the United Nations recovers from its mid-life crisis or sinks into irrelevance is up to us, the Member States. For what it is and what it will become, the United Nations is our own creation made of our own commitment and goodwill. It is up to us to rise to the challenge. Only when nations are united, will we get the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mamdi Condé, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Guinea.

Mr. Condé (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): My first words are to congratulate you, Sir, on your election and to tell you how gratified the delegation I have the honour to lead is, seeing you preside over the work of our august Assembly. Your great human qualities and great experience in international relations, to which you have devoted a great part of your life, convince us that our debates will be successful. You can rely on the support and full cooperation of my delegation in carrying out your noble mission.

On this occasion, I would also like to express the gratitude of my delegation to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, for his dynamic leadership during the past session. I would also like to convey to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, the expression of great appreciation as well as the sincere words of encouragement of His Excellency, General Lansana Conté, President of the Republic, for the Secretary-General's untiring efforts in defending and promoting the noble ideals of our Organization.

Fifty-nine years ago our Organization emerged based upon universal values that are equally relevant today. While there has been some definite success in defending those values, the world is now facing the effects and consequences of upheavals that threaten the foundations of our institution.

Three years after the tragic events of 11 September 2001, international terrorism continues to strike out blindly, in an odious manner. The increase in terrorism throughout the world is, for my country, a source of great concern. Through me, the Guinean Government reaffirms its resolute condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, and wishes to express its sympathy and solidarity with the victims of that scourge. My delegation believes that the struggle against terrorism must continue with greater resolve, but we must also recognize that we can only win the battle if the international community energetically attacks the underlying causes of that scourge, including inequality, poverty and injustice.

Given the highly tense international situation with its many hotbeds of tension throughout the world, progress over the last few months in the settlement of disputes is a source of satisfaction to us.

In West Africa, after many painful years of instability, we are happy to note positive achievements, thanks to the political will and resolve of its leaders, civil society and the international community.

In Liberia, there is hope since the transitional Government was established. The deployment of the United Nations mission and the progress achieved in terms of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, are all very encouraging. The considerable commitments taken in February at the international conference dedicated to the reconstruction of Liberia must be honoured, in order to preserve the peace that has been restored, and to ensure security throughout the subregion.

In Sierra Leone, the peace-building process undertaken with the support of the international community has shown some commendable successes — the gradual drawdown in the United Nations mission troops is being carried out according to agreed criteria. Further resources will be necessary to strengthen the capacity of the security forces so they may take over from the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, to reduce unemployment among the young, to reintegrate former combatants and to rebuild the country.

In order to promote the momentum of the peace process, the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Mano River — enlarged to include the neighbouring countries of Côte d'Ivoire and Mali — took place on 20 May 2004 in Conakry. The outcome

of the summit shows the political will of our States to strengthen their cooperation for the consolidation of peace and promotion of development in the subregion. I would like to reiterate the appeal that was addressed to the international community to concretely support the activities of the Mano River Union.

I would also like to renew my country's appeal for economic, humanitarian and financial assistance so that we can confront the negative impact of continuing to manage and care for hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons while consolidating our development foundation.

I can assure you that the Republic of Guinea will not fail in its historical duty to safeguard peace, and will continue to carry out its duties in terms of solidarity to populations in distress in the subregion, and we will do this on a basis of mutual confidence and respect for national sovereignty and our common obligations.

In Guinea-Bissau, notable progress enables us to have hope. We are gratified at the resumption of cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions which will make it easier to mobilize the required resources to build a strong peace.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the preservation of unity, territorial integrity and the full sovereignty of the country must serve as the core of the peace process that is under way. We appeal to all parties to rely on dialogue in order to overcome the difficulties that lie ahead on the way to peace.

Guinea is very preoccupied by the persistence of interdependent transborder problems that characterize socio-economic conflicts and crises. Among those problems are the proliferation of and illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, the movements of mercenaries, the recruitment and the use of child soldiers and the pillaging of natural resources.

The initiative for transforming the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) moratorium on export and import of small arms and light weapons into a regional convention is sound and deserves the firm support of the international community.

The Republic of Guinea encourages the Open-Ended Working Group established to negotiate an international instrument on small arms and light weapons to speedily arrive at an agreement ready for immediate implementation.

Like West Africa, the Great Lakes region is on the road to peace in spite of persistent instability in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is hoped that, beyond the instability of the transition period, the momentum that exists will enable that country to restore lasting peace and devote its energies to national reconstruction.

My delegation welcomes the deployment of the United Nations Operation in Burundi. We urge the international community to make greater efforts to conclude the peace process, thus ensuring genuine reconciliation among all citizens of Burundi.

Guinea is satisfied to note the progress made on the question of the Sudan and urges support for the African Union's efforts for a comprehensive peace agreement. Nevertheless, we are concerned at the humanitarian and security situation in Darfur. We invite the brotherly Sudanese Government and the parties concerned to spare no effort to reach a settlement to the crisis.

Turning to the Horn of Africa, my country welcomes the encouraging results of the national reconciliation in Somalia. We also hope that Ethiopia and Eritrea will manage to settle their dispute and restore peace.

The Republic of Guinea is convinced that there is no alternative to a political settlement of the question of Western Sahara. My country therefore encourages the parties to strengthen their cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in order to find a just, lasting and mutually acceptable settlement.

The Middle East continues to be the scene of grave events arising from the logic of violence that diminish day by day the chances of a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis. Guinea is greatly concerned at the Israeli Government's stubborn determination to continue its construction of the wall of separation in spite of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. My country is convinced that peace in the Middle East greatly depends on obliging all parties to respect their commitments as set out in the Quartet's road map and the relevant Security Council resolutions. I reaffirm the Guinean people's feelings of solidarity and friendship for the brotherly

Palestinian people and their historic leader, President Yasser Arafat.

My Government remains concerned at the situation prevailing in Iraq. It hopes that the establishment of a secure environment will enable the Iraqi people to consolidate their sovereignty and dedicate themselves to the reconstruction of their country.

With respect to the Korean Peninsula, my delegation urges the parties to continue efforts aimed at the peaceful and independent reunification of the two Koreas.

I also reaffirm the deep commitment of the Government and the people of Guinea to the one-China policy.

Four years ago, the adoption of the Millennium Declaration raised hopes for a better life for one billion human beings. To that end, my country urges the United Nations and the other development partners to commit themselves fully to contributing to the elimination of poverty by implementing the measures for attaining the Goals. Of course, achieving those Goals essentially depends on the creation of a global partnership for development, in particular in the least developed countries and the vulnerable segments of society.

While it is true that globalization has created enormous wealth and prosperity in certain regions of the world, it must also be noted that the majority of the inhabitants of the world, in particular in the least developed countries, have not reaped the benefits. We believe that a world that provides no opportunities for development cannot be a world of peace, or even a world at peace.

The Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, as well as the recent eleventh session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in São Paolo, Brazil, and the International AIDS Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, provided opportunities to make the needed commitments. The plans of action adopted at those conferences should be implemented by all development actors and at all levels.

We believe that the 2005 review of implementation of the Millennium Development Goals will enable us to make necessary adjustments and add the needed momentum. In that context, my delegation holds that only by increasing official development assistance, supported by debt relief and better access to markets within the framework of a more fair globalization, can we overcome the obstacles to sustainable development.

With respect to trade, at the present session Member States should reaffirm their political will to move beyond the failed World Trade Organization Conference at Cancún and conclude negotiations concerning the Doha Development Agenda. The recent agreement reached by the General Council of the World Trade Organization at Geneva is a beneficial step in the right direction.

Conscious of the importance of all that is at stake, the African leaders are more committed than ever to tackling the major challenges facing the continent. The efforts made to achieve the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) reflect that awareness. In that context, we appeal again to the international community for enhanced support for NEPAD, which steadfastly places Africa on the road to better taking charge of its own affairs.

Given the many challenges, the Member States of our Organization have the critical responsibility of taking action together and individually. Our collective response, commensurate with all these challenges, should be comprehensive, integrated and multilateral.

The reform of the United Nations is now more necessary than ever. I would even say it is indispensable. The restructuring of United Nations bodies, in particular the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council, will undoubtedly enhance the efficiency of our collective Organization.

My delegation calls for a reformed United Nations that is adapted to the new realities of the world, a United Nations of increased solidarity and tireless efficiency, better able to strengthen peace and stability in the world, for the happiness of our peoples.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Mr. Gryshchenko (Ukraine): Mr. President, first of all I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the important post of President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. Let me also

pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte for his highly professional and fruitful work accomplished at the helm of the General Assembly.

A year ago the Secretary-General stressed in this Hall that the United Nations had reached a fork in the road. This is still true today. We have a long list of problems, but we do not have a clear vision of how to deal with them. To choose the right way, to solve a conflict between wishes and resources, between desirable and achievable, we should concentrate on priorities.

Let me outline Ukraine's vision of the most important issues on which the United Nations should focus. The tragedy in the Russian city of Beslan and other recent terrorist attacks leave no doubt that fight against terrorism is truly the major priority. We express our sympathy to the victims and strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

The underlying reason for terrorism is to create chaos, to disrupt the global system of peace and security established and promoted by our Organization. Thus, we have to act collectively. We have to overcome old prejudices and to establish a spirit of confidence and a new culture of international cooperation, which would embrace the whole spectrum of political, law enforcement and security instruments.

Creation of a new and efficient system of information exchange on terrorism will help prevent new attacks and save priceless human lives. We support the views expressed by previous speakers on the need for a broader approach to address the complex and interdependent nature of security. To prevent terrorist acts and to eliminate the roots of terrorism, the United Nations must promote better understanding, a global rapprochement between various civilizations and religions. There are universal values of peace and security which are a cornerstone of our Organization and which can serve as a basis for a new atmosphere of tolerance in the world.

Ukraine, as a country actively participating in the stabilization forces in Iraq, is concerned by the terrorist insurgency and continuing violence there. Although the situation in Iraq remains difficult, there are some positive trends. Ukraine welcomes the transition of power to the Iraqi people and the formation of the interim government. It is important to ensure effective implementation of the timetable for a comprehensive political transition process in the country, particularly through the holding of free and fair elections, with the highest standards possible under the current circumstances.

Security Council resolution 1546 (2004) clearly envisages a central role for the United Nations in a comprehensive political transition in the country and in the reconstruction process. However, the Iraqi crisis and the international fight against terrorism have revealed the need to strengthen the United Nations as a key instrument for safeguarding international peace and security.

Institutional reform of the United Nations, including the Security Council, which should become truly representative and balanced, is an important task. We understand the reasons behind the suggestions to enlarge the Council in both its permanent and non-permanent membership, and we are ready to carefully consider relevant proposals. In this respect, Ukraine attaches primary importance to the allocation of an additional non-permanent seat to the Group of Eastern European States.

But reform must not only involve some structural changes. We should not have to embark on reform every 20 years when a new balance of power emerges in the international arena. Universal criteria and a common understanding of threats and challenges are necessary to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of our Organization in the twenty-first century.

We fully share the view expressed by the Secretary-General at the beginning of the general debate that the rule of law should be a priority both at home and in international affairs. We look forward to the outcome of the deliberations of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. United Nations authority should be increased, particularly through its greater involvement in conflict prevention and resolution. As President Leonid Kuchma of Ukraine emphasized, conflict prevention should be pivotal to the philosophy of United Nations work in the new millennium.

In our region, frozen conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorny-Karabakh and Transdnistria need to be solved as soon as possible.

As one of the major contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations and the largest in Europe, Ukraine is deeply concerned by the increasing danger to the lives of peacekeeping personnel. We

stand for the universal application of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and call upon all Member States to abide strictly by its provisions.

The role of the United Nations in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament should also be strengthened. This year Ukraine will mark the tenth anniversary of its accession to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Its landmark decision to eliminate the third largest nuclear arsenal and to relinquish nuclear capability has significantly enhanced the international non-proliferation regime and global security. We hope that Ukraine's positive example will be followed by other countries that now entertain the erroneous idea that they can protect their security through access to nuclear weapons.

All achievements by the international community may come to naught if our populations succumb to HIV/AIDS. This disease has killed more people annually than have all armed conflicts on the planet added together. We highly appreciate the work carried out by the United Nations, its specialized agencies and by the Secretary-General personally to combat this pandemic.

Ukraine supports the initiative to hold a high-level meeting in June next year to review progress in the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. At the same time, we believe that millions of our infected fellow citizens need concrete action. We are convinced that HIV/AIDS poses a fundamental challenge, not only to human health and well-being, but also to the very security of our world. In this regard, we attach particular significance to the Organization's declaration of a global emergency alert in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The main focus must be placed on prevention and treatment of the disease. As Ukraine President Kuchma stressed last year at the high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS, we need to elaborate a clear system to encourage sponsorship of medical projects as well as to expand the educational campaign on preventing the pandemic.

In the same vein, a leading role should be played by the mass media. Ukraine has launched an active mass media campaign with the involvement of all social groups, and we are ready to lead a regional media movement in the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

Another pressing problem is trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Ukraine spares no effort in addressing this issue. This year Ukraine became a party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Optional Protocols. However, tackling those issues requires a comprehensive approach and the close cooperation of the international community. We need to create a truly functioning and efficient mechanism to combine the efforts of the countries of origin, transit and destination.

Effective strategies to combat human trafficking should be based on both law enforcement measures and improvement of the economic and social conditions of potential victims. Ukraine welcomes the appointment of the Commission on Human Rights Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children, and stands ready to render every support in implementing the respective mandates.

Last year the world observed the seventieth anniversary of the horrible genocidal famine, which took the lives of over 7 million Ukrainian people. Taking this opportunity I wish once again to express our gratitude to all States that signed the joint statement on the seventieth anniversary of the great famine of 1932-1933 in Ukraine — Holodomor — or whose parliaments adopted acts of condemnation and sympathy, and to all organizations and individuals that took part in the events to honour the victims of the great famine.

The international community must thoroughly study that phenomenon in order to prevent its recurrence. We hope that the newly appointed Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide will also duly focus on this issue.

Almost two decades have passed since Ukraine was struck by another tragedy — the Chernobyl disaster. Ukraine together with other interested delegations put forth an initiative to hold, within the framework of the sixtieth session of United Nations General Assembly in spring 2006, a special plenary meeting to commemorate the victims of the Chernobyl disaster.

Ukraine has fulfilled its commitments related to the closure of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. What needs to be done today is to construct a new safe confinement. We expect that funds for this purpose promised by the Group of Seven in 1995 will be fully provided.

Chernobyl remains a searing wound, which proves every day how fragile our world is and how easily nature can be damaged. No one should doubt our commitment to the preservation of our environment. That is why Ukraine is so sensitive to environmental protection, whether it concerns building of roads, construction of new power plants or the reopening of a navigable waterway.

It was fashionable some years ago to criticize the United Nations for its inability to solve the most important problems. Today we all come to this Assembly with the ever-stronger conviction that there is no alternative to our Organization.

I am confident that despite all obstacles and doubts of the past, we can act for the attainment of the United Nations goals that are common to all of us. We can act swiftly, collectively and with a vision.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mamadou Bamba, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Bamba (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to convey to you, Sir, on behalf of the head of State, the Prime Minister and the Government and people of Côte d'Ivoire, my sincere congratulations on your unanimous election to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

Africa is proud to see, yet again, one of its sons in that eminent role. The sign of confidence on the part of all States Members of the United Nations reflects the great appreciation of the role being played by your country, Gabon, and by its President, His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, in dealing with the major issues characterizing development in the world, particularly in Africa.

I am also gratified to have this opportunity to say how grateful we are to your predecessor, Mr. Julian Hunte, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saint Lucia, who, with his many years of skill as a diplomat, brilliantly discharged his mission. He also deserves our gratitude and our plaudits.

Finally, I would like to express my warm appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the active and decisive role he has continued to play as head of the United Nations.

During the year 2004, the process of national peace and reconciliation initiated, following the signing of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and of Accra II, by the parties and political forces in Côte d'Ivoire encountered a major deadlock with the events in March and the suspension of the activities of the Government of National Reconciliation.

A solution to that dangerous deadlock required determined action from all parties involved. That action, fortunately, was forthcoming from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, who took the initiative of organizing a high-level meeting on Côte d'Ivoire on 6 July 2004 in Addis Ababa at the time of the third summit of the African Union. The major decision of that meeting was the convening, in Accra, of a summit devoted to the crisis in the Côte d'Ivoire. The summit, known as Accra III, was preceded, on the recommendation of the high-level meeting in Addis Ababa, by meetings of the major joint Ivorian/Burkina Faso and Ivorian/Malian commissions in July 2004, and by a mini-summit which brought together the heads of State of Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Mali on 27 July 2004 in Bamako.

During those meetings, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali agreed, inter alia, on the need to revitalize their cooperation in various areas, including human rights; the strengthening of safe economic corridors pending the reunification of Côte d'Ivoire; the strengthening of cooperation in security and defence matters, especially the surveillance of borders; a commitment not to allow the territory of one State to serve as a base for the destabilization of other States of the subregion; and the commitment of the three countries to work together to ensure the success of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme undertaken in Côte d'Ivoire.

Those various meetings between the Côte d'Ivoire and its neighbours created a climate of confidence and in part contributed to the success of the Accra III summit, held in the capital of Ghana on 29 July 2004 under the co-chairmanship of His Excellency Mr. John Kufuor, President of Ghana and Acting President of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, and in the presence of ten heads of State of Africa, the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS.

In the context of the holding, in Côte d'Ivoire, of open, free and transparent elections in 2005, important decisions accompanied by a road map were made at the Accra III summit. Thus, the President of the Republic, owing to the serious and continuing threats to the territorial integrity of Côte d'Ivoire resulting from the continuing crisis, had to make use of the powers conferred on him by the Constitution, with a view to implementing the provisions of section III, concerning eligibility, of the programme of the Government of National Reconciliation annexed to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, for the end of the month of September 2004.

The National Assembly was due to be convened in special session before the end of August 2004 in order to consider and adopt all the legislative texts provided for in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. The political forces of Côte d'Ivoire committed themselves to beginning the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme by 15 October 2004 at the latest. Moreover, they requested that the Prime Minister and the Government set a timetable for the restoration of State administration and public services throughout national territory.

As of today, the results of the reforms are as follows:

On the political level, we should note the reintegration of the three ministers who were dismissed from the Government of National Reconciliation and the signing of a decree delegating powers to the Prime Minister. Thanks to these developments, the Government of National Reconciliation resumed its activities, as shown by the meetings Council of Ministers held since then, in which all members of the Government participated.

On the legislative level, I am pleased to note the convening of the deputies in a special session as of 11 August 2004 to consider the most recent texts resulting from the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. I would like to recall that the National Assembly has already adopted laws on amnesty; the identification of individuals and the stay of foreigners in Côte d'Ivoire; the amendment of article 26 on rural land holdings; the financing of political parties, factions and electoral campaigns under public funding; the declaration of the national heritage by the President of the Republic; the ratification of the additional protocol that amends and supplements the provisions of article 7 of the protocol regarding the free movement of individuals and right of residence and of settlement, signed in Ouagadougou on 30 June 1989; and finally, the National Committee on Human Rights in Côte d'Ivoire. Several texts are currently being discussed in Parliament, and others are not yet under the ambit of that institution. The latter include draft laws dealing with a revision of article 35 of the constitution on criteria for eligibility for the presidency of the Republic; the legal regime for audio-visual communication; the status of the opposition; the declaration of assets of elected individuals; and the suppression of profiteering.

Regarding the military, the desire for peace is clear. Thus, after a pause of several months, the so-called quadripartite meetings, which bring together the defence and security forces and the armed forces of the Forces nouvelles under the aegis of impartial forces, that is, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and Operation Licorne, have resumed. Athletic events have been taking place recently between the national armed forces and those of the Forces nouvelles in an atmosphere of fraternity and good cheer. It should be recalled that, since 4 July 2003, the Government forces and the armed forces of the Forces nouvelles have signed an agreement marking the end of the war, and this agreement has been respected since then. I would also like to emphasize that, according to the commander of the UNOCI military force, more than 90 per cent of the troops of the United Nations peacekeeping force are already deployed in Côte d'Ivoire. All that is needed now is military logistics support for this force to be entirely operational.

Regarding the redeployment of the administration in those areas which have been subjected to war, this operation is gradually continuing, to the satisfaction of local populations, particularly in the west of the country.

As to alleged human rights violations following the crisis, Côte d'Ivoire has, out of a concern to combat impunity, above all, indicated its will to be open to all visits or investigations — which, in fact, it has itself requested — in order to appropriately asses the situation. In this regard, I can state that Côte d'Ivoire received a visit in January and February 2004 from the special rapporteurs on freedom of opinion and expression, the elimination of racial discrimination and migrants and mercenaries. During their missions, they had full and total cooperation from the authorities in

Côte d'Ivoire. The same is true for the international commission of inquiry into allegations of violations of human rights of 25 and 26 March 2004, and the national commission of inquiry set up in June 2004 to shed light on all alleged human rights violations committed in Côte d'Ivoire since 19 September 2002. That latter commission, which has just concluded its work, should shed light on all allegations of human rights violations in Côte d'Ivoire, including those recently committed in Korhogo.

Moreover, the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire, for its part, has established a parliamentary commission of inquiry designed to investigate the events of 19 December 2002 and subsequent events, in order to achieve, we all hope, genuine peace and reconciliation. National peace and reconciliation are incompatible with impunity. The international community should therefore assist Côte d'Ivoire in identifying the perpetrators of human rights and international humanitarian law violations in order to bring them to justice before the competent authorities.

We are starting afresh; we can now lay down the burden of our past concerns to embark on the path of hope. All citizens of Côte d'Ivoire without exception are determined to silence those rivalries that only spawn hate and rancour and to pool our efforts in the service of peace through dialogue. This is why we are counting on the ongoing support of the international community for our efforts at consolidating inter-Ivorian dialogue, the principal means for a restoration of confidence, peace and national reconciliation.

The Government of Côte d'Ivoire therefore takes note of the statement to the press today by the President of the Security Council on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, a statement that our Government considers as a step forward to finding a rapid solution to the crisis. Côte d'Ivoire is also counting on the assistance of international financial institutions and of developed countries for the implementation of the national programme of reconstruction and, in particular, of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

Allow me to indicate here that the security index of the United Nations at its present level is unfortunately a factor that is not facilitating contacts and therefore the start of negotiations with international financial institutions. A review that would lower this level would be most welcome.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to reiterate yet once again the gratitude of the people and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to the international community, in particular to France, the United States, Canada, all other friendly countries, the United Nations, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the European Union, the African Union and ECOWAS for their invaluable contributions, which have made it possible to overcome so many obstacles to date.

The situation in Côte d'Ivoire is not preventing us from seeing what is taking place elsewhere, above all on the African continent. The West African subregion is facing crises in Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire. Glimmers of hope for shortly putting an end to these situations do exist, but that optimism is clearly tempered by the continuation of such scourges as trafficking in children, drug trafficking, trafficking in small arms, mercenaries, child soldiers and terrorism, to name only these few. Thus, the strengthening of a coordinated battle against these scourges, under the aegis of ECOWAS and with the assistance of the international community, is necessary.

Côte d'Ivoire is a party to all existing conflict prevention and management mechanisms and intends to be fully involved in all initiatives undertaken to promote peace and stability on the global, continental and regional level. In that framework, it is contributing to the drawing up of a strategy for a pacification and stabilization of the West African region. The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Darfur in Somalia, the Middle East, and Iraq cannot be ignored and require sustained attention on the part of the international community. They also undeniably demonstrate the need for a strengthening of multilateralism in the settlement of the conflicts battering the world.

Regarding a reform of the United Nations, and particularly reform of the Security Council, I should like to reaffirm the support of Côte d'Ivoire for the shared African position, voiced several times here from this rostrum, in favour of an expanded Security Council with two permanent seats and three other non-permanent seats for Africa.

The countries of the Third World, which must cope with numerous difficulties, clearly cannot achieve the Millennium Development Goals while 2015 is

rapidly approaching. However, far from being overcome by defeatism, Africa has acquired a new instrument for development, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and its recommendations are integrated into national and subregional development and anti-poverty strategies. The African continent awaits the international community's implementation of commitments resulting from the major international conferences, in particular those undertaken by the Group of Eight for NEPAD.

I would like to conclude my remarks with an appeal for solidarity to all, given the numerous dangers threatening peace and international security. In that context, Côte d'Ivoire urges respect for commitments and peace agreements concluded together by all States. In the view of my country, this active and relentless commitment to preventing conflicts includes at least three elements: preventive diplomacy, based on a system of early warning; education for peace; and, finally, the struggle against poverty in order to ensure sustainable development. Therefore, once the conditions for a peaceful existence have thus been fulfilled, the entire world will be able to move forward towards a world of shared well-being and happiness.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency The Honourable Chirau Ali Mwakwere, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya.

Mr. Mwakwere (Kenya): I am honoured to address the General Assembly for the first time. On behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, I convey to you, Mr. President, and to other members of the Bureau our warm congratulations on your election to steer the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I am confident that, with your experience and professionalism, you will lead us to the fruitful conclusion of this session. I would also like to pay tribute to His Excellency Mr. Julian Hunte for his outstanding performance as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session.

Kenya is convinced that a vibrant, responsive and representative United Nations system is the desire of all Member States. My delegation welcomes the ongoing efforts to reorganize and revitalize the United Nations to make it more effective and efficient. The revitalization exercise must reaffirm the status of the General Assembly as the pre-eminent policy-making organ of the United Nations, as envisaged in the United Nations Charter. With respect to the Security Council, it should be enlarged, democratized and made more representative to reflect the Organization's membership in the twenty-first century. We look forward to the findings of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, appointed by the Secretary-General during last year's session of the General Assembly.

I pay tribute to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his commitment and his efforts to ensure the capacity of United Nations offices, in particular the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the only United Nations headquarters in a developing country. We are encouraged to note that, during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, budgetary provisions were made for improving and modernizing conference facilities at the Nairobi Office. Nonetheless, there is still a great deal to be done. We urge the Secretary-General to significantly increase the regular budget component of funding the United Nations Office at Nairobi to bring it in line with the administrative and financial arrangements of similar United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna.

The production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel mines are problems of major proportions that have caused untold suffering to populations throughout the world, with Africa the most mine-affected continent. Kenya has been given the honour to host the First Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction — the Ottawa Convention.

The Conference — also known as the 2004 Nairobi Summit on a Mine-free World — will be held from 29 November to 3 December 2004. Among the events scheduled will be the pre-Conference ceremonies on 28 November, presided over by the President of the Republic of Kenya, the Honourable Mwai Kibaki, who has extended invitations to world leaders to attend the Conference. I take this opportunity to invite each and every one of those present here to participate at the highest possible level at the Conference. I also encourage them to take advantage of their presence in Nairobi to sample Kenya's hospitality and particularly its world-famous safaris, as well as the sandy beaches along Kenya's coast.

International peace, security and stability are prerequisites for sustainable development. Kenya recognized early that peace and stability should be the cornerstone of both its national and foreign policies. Consequently, Kenya has taken an active part in the search for peaceful solutions to conflicts in our subregion, in Africa and in the rest of the world. Within the framework of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Kenya is chairing the southern Sudan peace process and the Somali reconciliation process. I am pleased to report that, in the Sudan peace process, milestones have been achieved since the signing of the first protocols in 2002. The Nairobi Declaration on the final phase of the Sudan peace process was signed on 5 June 2004.

Although the process has been long and tedious, a final peace agreement is within reach for the two-decade-long conflict. I would like to appeal to the international community to redouble its support and commitment in assisting the people of the Sudan to achieve peace through constructive dialogue. It is also my hope that events in the Darfur region will not subsume the positive developments achieved by the Naivasha process. However, post-conflict reconstruction will require considerable resources. The international community must rise to that challenge.

As regards the Somali peace process, I am pleased to report encouraging developments in the past few weeks that indicate a willingness on the part of the people of Somalia to embrace peace after 14 years of turmoil. In mid-August, 275 members of Parliament were elected by representatives of the Somali people, and the Transitional Federal Parliament of the Somali Republic was inaugurated on 29 August in Nairobi. Subsequently, the Parliament elected its Speaker on 15 September 2004. It is expected that the President will be elected next month. The process has been long and costly, but, as a result of our determination and optimism, we hope to witness the installation of a Federal Government of Somalia by the end of this year. The presence of a Government in Mogadishu, however, should be not an end in itself, but the beginning of a long journey towards peace, stability and development.

I appeal to the international community, and especially the United Nations, to move with speed and to provide the support necessary for capacity-building, infrastructure and security and other logistical support for the new Government. I would like to express Kenya's gratitude for the assistance provided by IGAD Partners Forum, the United Nations and the international community as a whole in support of both peace processes.

Long-standing conflicts in our subregion have led to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which constitute major security concerns to my country and others. For example, Kenya has been at the forefront of regional initiatives to combat this menace. In March 2000, Kenya hosted the First Ministerial Review Conference of the Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, which produced the Declaration. In April this year, Kenya hosted the Second Ministerial Review Conference of the Nairobi Declaration, which adopted the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons. Those efforts are intended to consolidate a regional framework within which to deal with the problem of proliferation in order to improve security so that the people of the region can redirect their energies and resources towards meaningful economic activities.

Kenya therefore welcomes and fully supports the convening of the international conference for the Great Lakes region on conflict and development, scheduled for 17-20 November 2004 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. My delegation applauds the United Nations and the African Union for mobilizing support and resources for the preparation of the conference.

The threat of international terrorism remains real. We unreservedly condemn all acts of international terrorism. On behalf of my delegation and the Kenyan people, I extend our sympathy to the Government and people of Russia on the recent barbaric terrorist attack on innocent school children, parents and teachers in Beslan. Kenya has been a victim of terrorist attacks in the recent past. We are therefore more convinced than ever of the need to address this issue collectively. No single country, however resourceful, has the capacity to successfully deal with it on its own. I would like to assure the Assembly that Kenya fully supports international efforts in dealing with this problem. Collective efforts to address the issue must be through international cooperation, information and intelligence sharing, coordinated by the United Nations.

In line with the international efforts to ensure that peace and security prevail, we welcome the decision by the African Union to establish a standby African force.

Kenya has been honoured to host one of the regional centres, the Eastern Africa Brigade. We are ready to provide the requisite facilities and logistical support to the centre. On the international arena, Kenya has long been a major troop-contributing country in peacekeeping operations and will continue to actively participate with other nations under the aegis of the United Nations. We call upon the international community to assist the African Union in realizing the establishment of the force, which will be one of the key tools for ensuring peace and stability on the continent.

Poverty remains a major impediment to sustainable development, particularly for developing countries. Current trends indicate that countries in sub-Saharan Africa will not meet the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015. We emphasize the importance of the fulfilment of the eighth Millennium Development Goal on a global partnership for development, and especially the realization of the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product as official development assistance from developed countries. We therefore look forward to the outcome of the 2005 high-level plenary of the General Assembly on the review of the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, including the Millennium Declaration.

The attainment of the Millennium Development Goals will depend on how effectively we deal with the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other related communicable diseases, among other problems. In sub-Saharan Africa, it has resulted in a reversal of economic and social gains made over the years. Governments need to develop strategic plans that identify key priority response areas, such as prevention and advocacy, treatment, care and support. Also important are the mitigation of the socio-economic impact and research. We are grateful to our development partners and the United Nations Global Fund for their support and provision of resources in fighting these diseases. We look forward to their continued assistance.

At the regional level, tremendous progress has been made towards regional economic integration. The East African Community Customs Union Protocol, which was signed on 2 March 2004 by Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, is intended to create a single investment and trade area. We hope that this positive development will encourage local and foreign direct investment in the subregion.

We welcome the support accorded to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) initiative by the United Nations and the G-8 countries. However, we regret to note that the commitments made to the NEPAD initiative have not been fully realized and call upon our development partners to fulfil their pledges.

This year, Kenya is facing a severe famine caused by drought, which has affected a large section of the population. Consequently, Kenya and the United Nations have issued a joint appeal for assistance to contain the famine. We are grateful for the prompt support of the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and bilateral donors. However, the need for more assistance still exists.

To achieve long-term economic stability and development, the Government of Kenya has embarked on an economic recovery strategy for wealth and employment creation, aimed at revitalizing the economy and enhancing the welfare of our people. Other measures have been taken to improve the well-being of the Kenyan people. Those include the improvement and promotion of the welfare of children through free and compulsory primary education and the recognition of the central role played by women in development.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the important role the United Nations plays in global affairs. It could be greatly enhanced through adherence to the provisions of the Charter and to the rule of law. Member States should respect those instruments in the conduct of their international relations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Le Cong Phung, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

Mr. Le Cong Phung (Viet Nam): At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, to warmly congratulate you, Sir, an eminent son of Gabon and of Africa, with which Viet Nam has always enjoyed warm sentiments and brotherly relations, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. I am confident that, under your able guidance, this session will be crowned with fine success. I also take this opportunity to express our high

appreciation for the tremendous efforts and contributions made by the previous President, Mr. Julian Hunte, to the work of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

As the fifth year of the twenty-first century approaches, we all cannot help asking ourselves whether the world is a safer, fairer or — in a more comprehensive assessment — better place for our peoples to live in. With all that has happened over the last year, unfortunately, the answer cannot be affirmative.

The recent barbaric and inhuman massacre of hostages at the school in Beslan, Russia, its scale and the manner in which it was committed show that terrorism has become more brutal than ever and that it is spreading to almost every corner of the world and sparing no nation. At this forum, we wish to reaffirm the position of the Vietnamese Government denouncing every act of terrorism. We urge the international community to further strengthen cooperation with a view to eliminating terrorism from our civilized world. We have more than once stated our fundamental position that, if it is to enjoy broad support and participation and therefore be effective, the fight against terrorism must be pursued in conformity with the provisions of the United Nations Charter and free from selectivity and double standards.

A serious review would reveal that this is not a situation we can claim to have today. For a second time in two years, last April, in pursuit of their secessionist aim of creating a so-called independent State of Degar, Kok Ksor and the organization he created, the Montagnard Foundation, staged a violent terrorist riot in the central highlands of Viet Nam, seriously threatening the security and territorial integrity of our country. And still today, they continue to enjoy unjustified protection by certain forces.

While encouraged by the trend of enhanced cooperation and friendship among countries and regions, we are equally concerned about conflicts and other threats mounting in different areas, especially in the Middle East and Africa. The Iraqi people are yet to know genuine peace. Non-traditional security threats, such as narcotics, the spread of diseases, transnational organized crime and environmental degradation, continue to affect adversely the life of peoples and the development of nations.

The year 2005 is approaching. We are to review the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. An undeniable fact is that the window of opportunity for the economic development and integration of developing countries has become narrower, while the gap between the rich countries and the poor countries and that between the rich and the poor within countries are increasingly wider. According to a recent report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the gap between the world's richest and poorest countries at present is 74-fold. That being the reality, what is discouraging is that the proportion of resources being utilized for economic development is negatively imbalanced. Last year, for example, military expenditures by rich countries amounted to more than $700 billion, which was 10 times higher than the total amount of their official development assistance for developing nations.

Instead of receiving a stronger commitment to development assistance, developing countries have fallen victim to unfair practices in international trade. A case in point is the application of protectionist measures under the form of anti-dumping duties imposed on Viet Nam's catfish and shrimp, as well as similar products of other developing countries. The unfair imposition of anti-dumping duties on Viet Nam's shrimp export by the United States has inflicted losses on 3.5 million poor Vietnamese farmers who earn their living directly or indirectly from the shrimp industry. That not only runs counter to the principles of the World Trade Organization (WTO), but also undermines the poverty-reduction efforts of the Vietnamese Government, as well as the results of technical assistance provided by such international bodies as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank and various United Nations agencies.

In a world where injustice and uncertainties remain, it is both a desire of all nations and a primary task of the international community to build a more peaceful and fairer environment conducive to development and prosperity. Such an environment can be created only if all nations strictly comply with the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, of which respect for the national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of nations are most important. As the world's largest multilateral

Organization, the United Nation is the sole entity fully capable of creating that new environment.

Viet Nam holds that, to fulfil that crucial role, the United Nations should be reformed in a way that will improve its effectiveness and democracy. We highly appreciate the ongoing efforts of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and hope that the Panel will be able to put forth recommendations that can serve as a good basis for member States to hold in-depth discussions with a view to arriving at concrete measures to be implemented soon, thus meeting the expectations of the world public at large of a new, effective and more democratic United Nations.

In that connection, Viet Nam is of the view that, if the Security Council's democracy, effectiveness and transparency are to be enhanced and if it is to truly act on behalf of all United Nations Members, as stated in the Charter, both the non-permanent and the permanent membership of the Security Council should be enlarged and developing countries more adequately represented in that important body. We wish to reiterate our support for Japan, Germany, India and other capable countries from different continents becoming permanent members of the Security Council once it is enlarged.

A more peaceful, fairer and more favourable environment for development requires international economic relations based on equality, mutual benefits, shared responsibilities and the realization of commitments. Developed countries should seriously seek to fulfil their commitments to allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product to official development assistance; provide broader, faster and deeper debt relief to poor nations; finance development projects; and create fairer and more favourable conditions for developing nations to access the world market and to join the WTO.

Viet Nam holds that regional and interregional cooperation and new partnerships between developed and developing countries are effective measures for putting into place fair and favourable conditions for development and for making sure that all nations will benefit from the current process of globalization. We welcome the initiative on a new strategic partnership between Asia and Africa that is being discussed among countries of the two continents. The initiative, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, is highly commendable. Viet Nam attaches great importance to promoting South-South cooperation, especially with African countries, as manifested in the "two plus one" formula, in which Viet Nam and an African country, with the participation of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, cooperate in agricultural development. With a view to increasing cooperation with and assistance to developing nations, we call for an end to unjust embargoes, especially the unilateral embargo against Cuba, which has been in place for years now and caused untold difficulties and suffering for the Cuban people.

It is Viet Nam's consistent policy to support the just cause of the Palestinian people in the struggle for their inalienable rights. We call on the parties concerned to refrain from and cease acts of violence and actively to participate in the implementation of the road map for peace towards a just and lasting solution that takes into account the interests of the parties concerned for the sake of peace and stability in the Middle East.

Restoring peace and security and reconstructing Iraq are pressing needs of the people of that country at present. Viet Nam is concerned about the escalating violence against innocent civilians. We hope that the situation in Iraq will soon be stabilized so that the Iraqi people can focus on their national reconstruction and development.

The United Nations should play a more active role in Iraq, commensurate with its mandate. Viet Nam attended the conference on the reconstruction of Iraq and is willing to involve itself more actively in that process.

In our national reform and development process over the past 18 years, we have surmounted enormous challenges to realize the goal of a rich people, a strong country, a just, democratic and civilized society. Encouraging results have been recorded. Over the past 10 years, the average annual growth of our gross domestic product has been maintained at as high as 7.4 per cent, with the number of poor households reduced by half. Special importance has been given to people-centred development. We are resolved to sustain high economic growth in combination with the development of culture, the advancement of social progress and equality, the improvement of living conditions for the people and, most important, the achievement of the goal of becoming an industrialized country by 2020.

Given our substantial initial achievements and the appropriate path on which we have embarked, the

United Nations Development Programme, in its third report on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in Viet Nam in 2003, assessed that Viet Nam is capable of overcoming its challenges to reach the Goals set in the Millennium Declaration. We wish to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to the United Nations agencies for their effective assistance. The United Nations agencies in Viet Nam have taken important steps to further enhance cooperation effectiveness, especially those within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. We are committed to continuing to work with them in striving for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

In its reform process, Viet Nam pursues a foreign policy of openness, independence, sovereignty and the diversification and multilateralization of relations, and is willing to be a friend to and reliable partner of all countries striving for independence, peace, development and cooperation. Increasing regional and interregional cooperation is a consistent policy and an inseparable component of the Vietnamese Government's policy towards greater international integration. Viet Nam is actively participating in economic cooperation activities within the frameworks of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Asia-Pacific Conference on Electron Microscopy and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Within ASEAN, Viet Nam works closely with other ASEAN countries to promote regional cooperation through such initiatives as the creation of the ASEAN security community, the ASEAN economic community and the ASEAN socio-cultural community, the Initiative for ASEAN Integration, the initiative on sub-Mekong regional cooperation, and development triangles. ASEAN attaches great importance to promoting its relationship with dialogue partners. Active steps are being taken to establish free-trade areas between ASEAN and China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, and to promote closer economic partnership with the United States, the European Union, Russia and India, including free-trade areas. Viet Nam believes that multifaceted cooperation in South-East Asia will make important contributions to building a peaceful, fair and favourable environment for regional countries.

As evidence of its determination to participate more actively in international and interregional cooperation frameworks, Viet Nam is going to host the Fifth Asia-Europe Summit in Hanoi this October and the APEC Summit in 2006. We are standing for election to a non-permanent seat in the Security Council for the term 2008-2009. In undertaking those important efforts, we look forward to enjoying the continued support and cooperation of the international community.

Our global village longs for a more peaceful, stable and favourable environment for development and shared prosperity. Striving together, we will turn that dream into reality.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.